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Kathleen Kiernan Joins Faculty

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Kathleen Kiernan Joins Faculty

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Dr. Kathleen Kiernan is bringing her 29 years of federal law enforcement and academic experience to the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) as the Center's newest faculty member.

Kiernan is team teaching the Multi-disciplinary Approaches to Homeland Security class.

She has a long track record in the law enforcement and national security communities, including a stint as the Assistant Director for the Office of Strategic Information and Intelligence at the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.



Complementing that real-world experience is a doctorate in Education from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Ill., as well as master's degrees from the Joint Military Intelligence College in Washington, D.C., and from George Mason University in Northern Virginia.

Currently, she heads her own consulting firm, Kiernan Group Holdings, based in Jacksonville, Fla., where she resides. The firm brings together experts of various disciplines – intelligence, law enforcement and security – to serve government and private sector clients.

Working with and encouraging collaboration among experts from the intelligence and national security world is a common thread of Kiernan's work history.

She said it is also one of the attractions for coming to the CHDS.

"It's a collection of the finest minds from the practitioner and academic community who make significant contributions in shaping the thinking of homeland security and the homeland defense, not only on current threats but for those on the horizon," she said.

With her professional resume and academic credentials, Kiernan is uniquely suited for her role at the Center. Her doctorate in Adult Education provides a foundation for teaching adult students who are leaders in their field.

"It's learner-centric versus instructor-driven," she said. "This is a place where intellectual risks are encouraged and real learning results. There is a rounding, a completeness, that occurs when you are in the company of giants."

Kiernan has past experience in collaborating with peers on the faculty at CHDS – another attraction in working here. Kiernan worked with Dr. David Brannan on a project examining the nexus between criminality and terrorism.

"We brought together academics, first responders, war fighters and representatives from the private sector to examine the intersections of experience against a set of complex problems, similar to the academic work at NPS," she said.

Brannan said that the project examined, for example, how the daily actions of police could inform national security at other levels. Likewise, Kiernan is part of a teaching team exploring how to bridge the perceived gaps between first responders and other levels of local, state and federal entities involved in homeland

security, he added.

"She is helping to put some of these heretofore disparate disciplines into a framework in which they can communicate with one another," Brannan said.

"She brings another piece of the puzzle."

Also on faculty at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore for the master's program in Intelligence Analysis, she said there are some differences as well as commonalities among students at both institutions.

"Students at Johns Hopkins University are more aligned with the analytical disciplines of homeland security, the intelligence community and the Department of Defense, whereas students at the Naval Postgraduate School represent the more operational and strategic elements of these same communities," she observed.

"The common thread is the fact they both are places that attract passionate participants who balance full-time workloads and family lives in addition to their academic commitments; truly they are leaders in their field."

Kiernan wants to impress upon students at CHDS the importance of reaching across disciplines and jurisdictions, just as she does in her work.

"The importance of collaborating across disciplines is perhaps the most invaluable skill set," Kiernan said. "Here, they have the opportunity to embrace critical thinking skills, refine collaborative skills and interact with regarded thinkers from across the globe who are engaged at all levels of national security and defense. Practitioners have an ability to 'see' what is invisible to the untrained eye and that ability is a significant contribution to the world of security – particularly when combined with the academic rigor and excellence which exists at CHDS."

Kiernan's zest for the national security and law enforcement arena extends beyond her job duties. She is passionate about supporting women in that professional field. When she began her career as a uniformed officer in the mid-1970s while a student at Northeastern University in Boston, there were few women role models in the ranks.

Her experience resulted in a website, www.sameshield.com, which highlights women in law enforcement. The information-packed site outlines the history of women in that profession as well as offering assorted resources for those in the field.

"I decided early on that I would become a good mentor and then I developed a virtual mentoring capability while I was in graduate school to reach young men and women and imbue them with the same passion that I have for the profession even though perhaps we would never have the opportunity to meet or work together," Kiernan said.

Other highlights of Dr. Kiernan's credentials include: Member of the Army Science Board where she led a panel exploring the transition of law enforcement training and technology to the war fighter; served as the ATF representative to the Counterterrorism Center (CTC) at CIA during 1993-1995; is the National Chair for the InfraGard Program and Council Vice President for ASIS, International, with oversight of the Critical Infrastructure Working Group (CIWG); chairs the Domestic Intelligence Council for the Intelligence and National Security Alliance (INSA) and she is the former chair of the DCI's

Law Enforcement Working Group (LEWG), an initiative designed to bridge the communities of intelligence and law enforcement; member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Terrorism subcommittee; an Intelligence Fellow (2001); graduate of the FBI's National Executive Institute (Class 26); member of the Board of Regents of the Potomac Institute and the DNI's SHARP Program.

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